

In March 2014, Sir Kamuta Latasi, the parliamentary speaker, was ousted and replaced by former speaker Otinielu Tauteleimalae Tausi.

Tuvalu remains threatened by global climate change and rising sea levels, as well as a sharp reduction in its fresh water supply as a result of low levels of rainfall in recent years.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 37 / 40 [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 12 / 12

A governor general represents the British monarch as head of state. The prime minister, chosen by Parliament, leads the government. The unicameral, 15-member Parliament is elected to four-year terms. A six-person council administers each of Tuvalu's nine atolls. Council members are chosen by universal suffrage for four-year terms. Twenty-six candidates competed in the September 2010 general elections, and Maatia Toafa was elected prime minister. Toafa was ousted in a no-confidence vote in December 2010, after which Willy Telavi replaced him as prime minister. Telavi himself was ousted by a vote of no-confidence in 2013, and Parliament subsequently chose Enele Sopoaga to serve as prime minister.

With a two-thirds majority vote in March 2014, legislators removed Sir Kamuta Latasi from the position of parliamentary speaker. Latasi and Sopoaga had clashed in 2013 after Latasi adjourned Parliament before the opposition, at the time led by Sopoaga, could debate the no-confidence motion against Telavi. Former speaker Otinielu Tauteleimalae Tausi replaced Latasi.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 15 / 16

There are no formal political parties, though no law bars their formation. Candidates typically run as independents and align themselves based on geography, tribal loyalties, family ties, and personalities. Intense personal and political rivalries frequently prompt new alliances, and no-confidence motions are often used as a tool to oust opponents.

C. Functioning of Government: 10 / 12

Tuvalu is one of the few states in the Pacific Islands where corruption is not severe, though international donors have called for improved governance. A tenth of the country's annual budget comes from an overseas investment fund set up by Britain, Australia, and South Korea in 1987 to provide development assistance. Sales of fishing licenses, lease of its internet suffix (.tv), and the economic boost provided by remittances from overseas workers also supplement the state budget.

Civil Liberties: 57 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 16 / 16

The constitution provides for freedoms of speech and the press, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. The semi-public Tuvalu Media Corporation (TMC) operates the country's sole radio and television stations, as well as the biweekly newspaper *Tuvalu Echoes* and the government newsletter *Sikuelo o Tuvalu*. Human rights groups have criticized TMC for its limited coverage of politics and human rights issues, but there are no allegations of censorship or political agendas in reporting. Many residents use satellite dishes to access foreign programming. Internet access is largely limited to the capital because of high cost and connectivity challenges. A five-year contract between Kacific Broadband Satellites and Tuvalu Telecom, announced in June 2014, aims to increase internet bandwidth and expand access.

Religious freedom is upheld in this overwhelmingly Christian country, where religion plays a major role in society. Academic freedom is generally respected.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 12 / 12

The constitution provides for freedoms of association and assembly, and the government upholds these rights in practice. Nongovernmental organizations provide a variety of health, education, and other services.

Workers have the right to strike, organize unions, and choose their own representatives for collective bargaining. With two-thirds of the population engaged in subsistence farming and fishing, there is only one registered trade union (for merchant marine workers). Professional associations for public sector employees are also active.

F. Rule of Law: 15 / 16

The judiciary is independent and provides fair trials. In a two-tier system, higher courts include the Court of Appeal, and the High Court, and the Privy Council in London, while lower courts consist of senior and resident magistrates as well as island and land courts. The chief justice of Tonga performs the same duties in Tuvalu, visiting twice a year to preside over the High Court. A civilian-controlled constabulary force maintains internal order. There are no reports of abuse in the prison system. Jails meet minimum standards, but limited capacity can mean long waits in the legal system and restricted access to proper counsel.

An ombudsman—the first in Tuvalu—was appointed in August 2014 to enforce the Leadership Code, which governs the conduct of public officials. His five-year term began in October 2014.

Same-sex sexual relations between men are illegal and punishable by up to 15 years in prison, though the relevant legislation is not enforced.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 14 / 16

Although women enjoy equal access to education, traditional customs and social norms condone gender-based discrimination and limit women's role in society. Women cannot inherit the traditional title of *matai*, or chief, from their fathers, and few women hold prominent roles in business or government. Violence and abuse against women does not appear to be widespread. There are also no laws against sexual harassment, and spousal rape is not explicitly illegal.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

[Full Methodology](#)